



BASW
England

The professional association for
social work and social workers

BASW England webinars

Tuesday 6th August 2019,
12pm – 1pm

Child Sexual Exploitation: a rights and relationship-based approach

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What we will cover

How young people's rights to voice, privacy and autonomy may sometimes conflict with their rights to safety, guidance and protection

Ways of resolving the tensions arising from conflicting views within and across professional systems, and with parents and young people

Working in a relational, child-centred and collaborative manner to involve young people as partners in their own protection

Harnessing organisational resources to further develop your reflective practice

Who and what do you see?

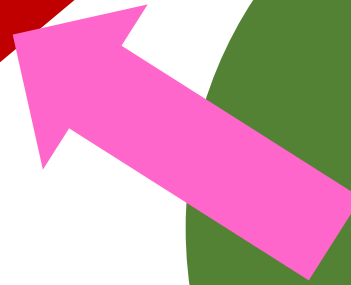


How do we make sense of this? What affects our capacity to see the world as they see it?

World from
YP's
perspective

Noise

World from
worker's
perspective



The original problem: failing to see and hear young people

‘They didn’t even ask me if I was OK or if it’s OK to talk about it.’

“If only someone had listened”

‘They talked about me like I wasn’t even there. They were very harsh.’

‘They said we were putting ourselves at risk’

‘They made me feel like it was my fault.’

‘Why was I sent away from home and not him?’

- Victimhood not seen
- Disclosures not believed
- Failure to protect
- Harmful sexual behaviours and drug involvement criminalised
- Failure to engage and support YP

Key learning from Inquiry into CSE in groups and gangs

- *“Children and young people told us repeatedly that ‘being done to’ by the agencies charged with their care compounded their sense of powerlessness and hopelessness. They want to be partners in their protection and recovery plans and those that had this experience valued it immensely and felt stronger for being involved”.*

(Berelowitz et al., 2013, p. 56).

Led to the 'See Me Hear Me' framework (Berelowitz et al, 2013)

Voice of the
Child

Voice of the
Professional

Protecting the
Child

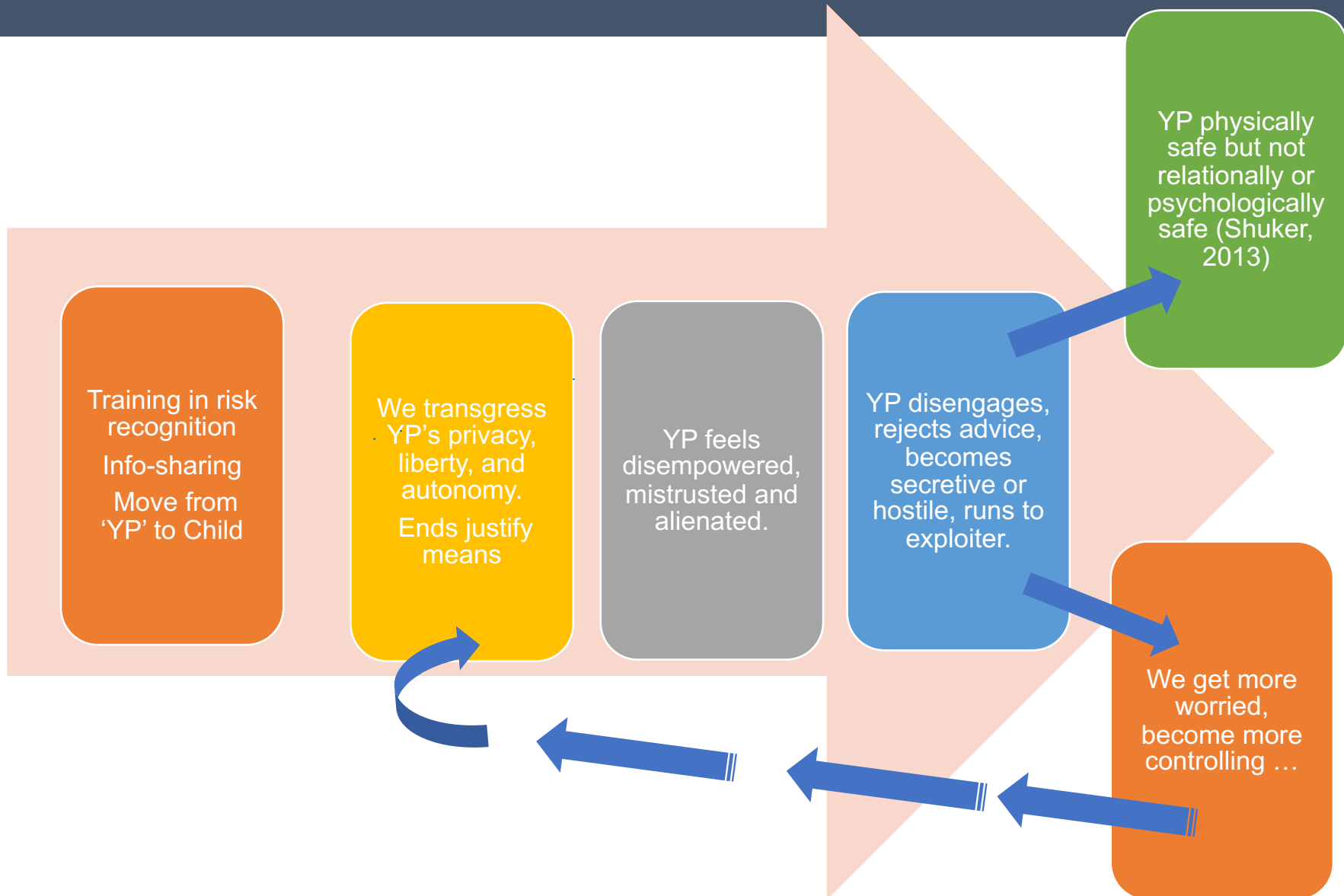
Seven principles of effective practice

- The child's best interests must be the top priority
- Participation of children and young people
- Enduring relationships and support
- Comprehensive problem-profiling
- Effective information-sharing within and between agencies
- Supervision, support and training of staff
- Evaluation and review

Nine foundations of effective practice

- A focus on the child.
- Gaining a child's confidence
- Effective leadership
- Strategic planning
- Everyone on alert
- Spotting the warning signs
- Joined-up working
- Pre-emptive action
- Scrutiny and oversight

The professional response to earlier failures: protectionist



Double-bind: 'No win' scenarios

Wicked problems

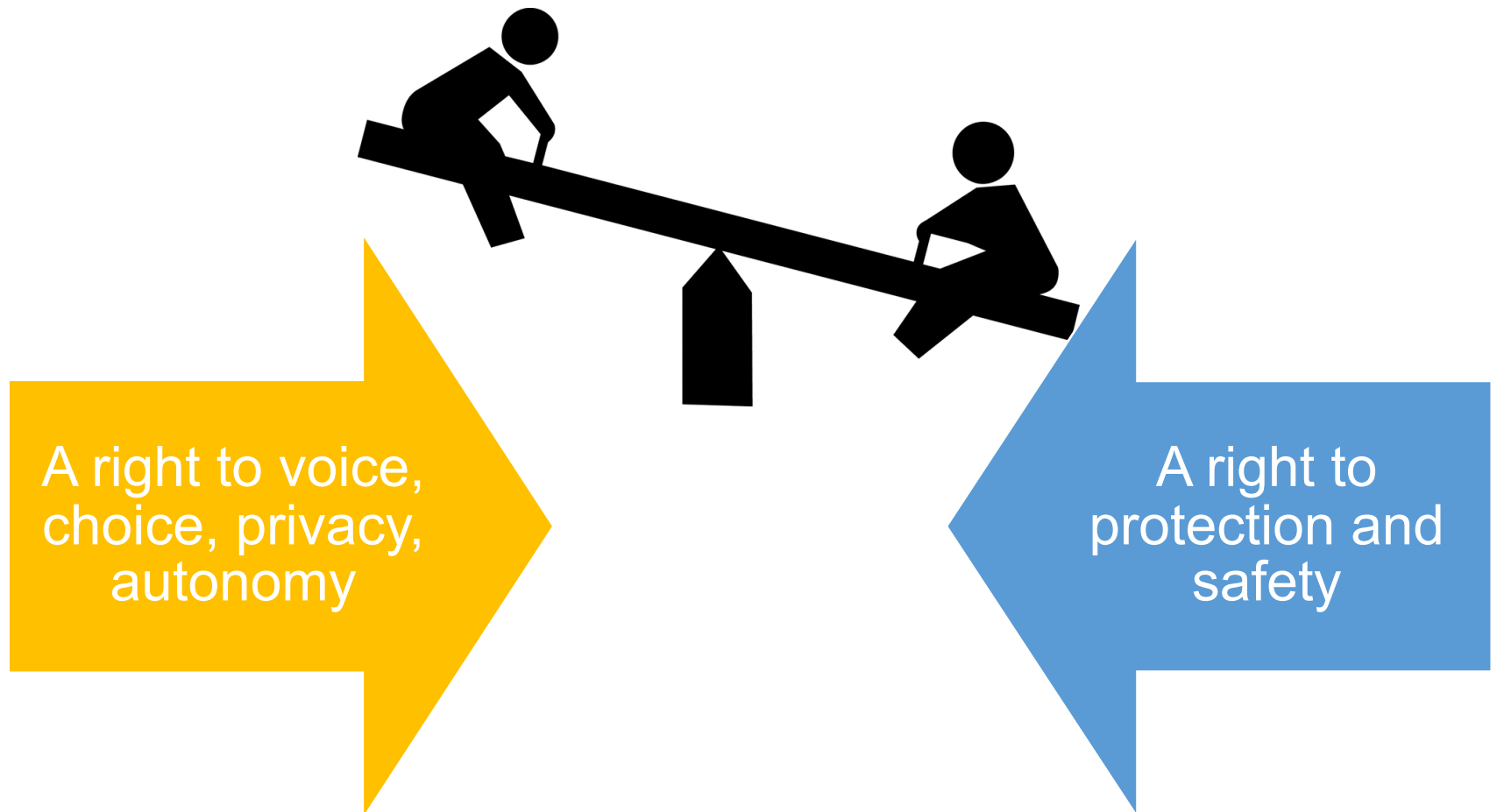
**She would
'probably be dead'
had she not been
placed against her
will in secure
accommodation**

**BUT this hadn't
ultimately changed
her attitude to risk
and whether or not
she was being
exploited**

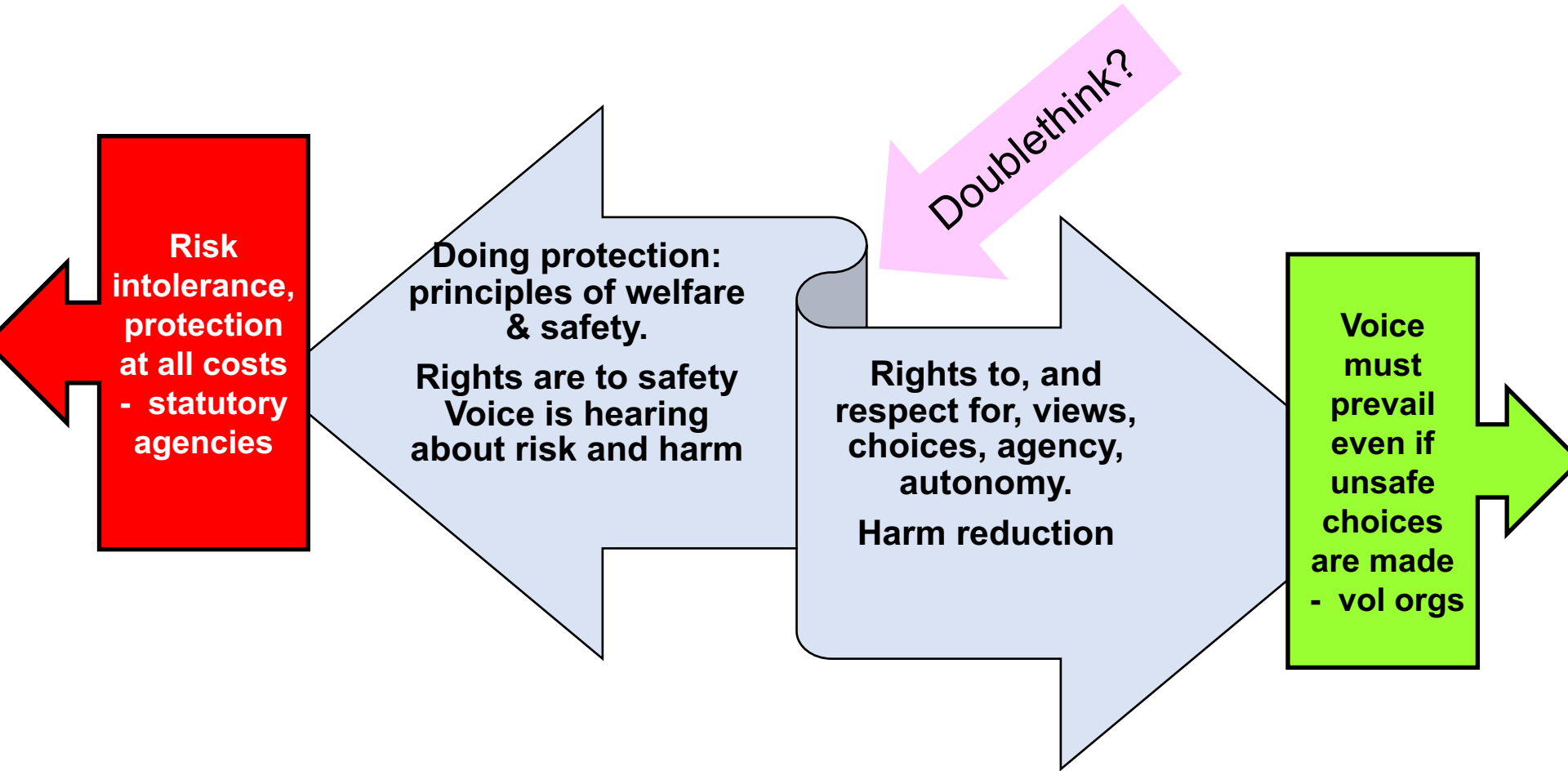
**She takes risks but
keeps them secret
so the risk level
possibly higher**

Both over-protectiveness and laissez-faire have their own risks

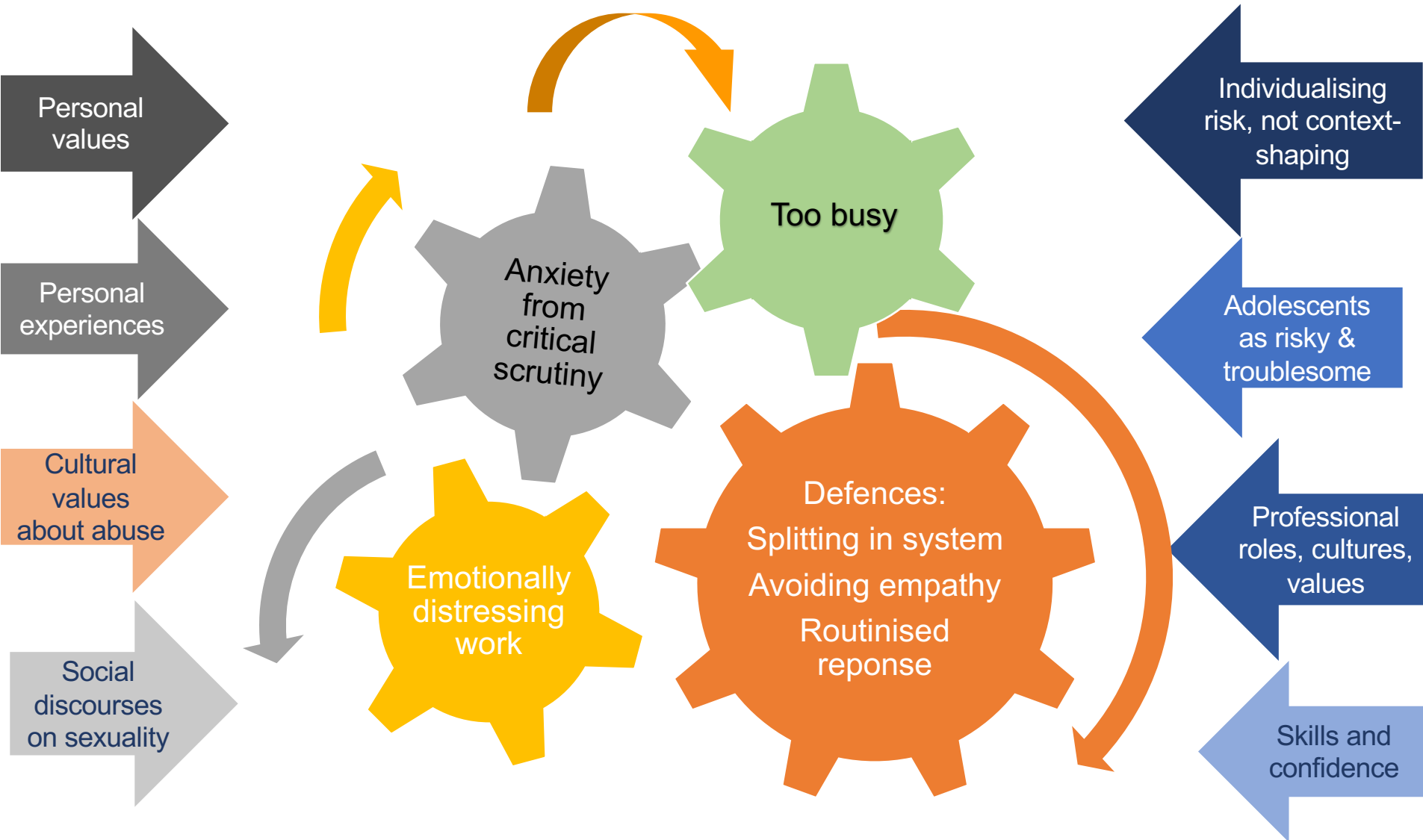
A conflict emerged: how to balance dual and potentially competing rights



Reductionist false dichotomy



Dynamics and assumptions influence how we balance these rights



Some possible ways
forward

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Into the mind of the young person: recognising agency and 'choice'

Sexual and criminal exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual or criminal activity

- a) **in exchange** for something the victim needs or wants, and/or*
- b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity **appears consensual** (see Department for Education, 2017/18).*

- A constrained choice of their 'least worst option' (Hallett, 2017) among limited opportunities and support networks
 - Protection of gang, bed for the night, some money, pay for drugs, some affection
- Understanding their constrained and ambiguous agency - different to CSA's clear perpetrator, grooming and power differential
- Them choosing to leave situation is preferable

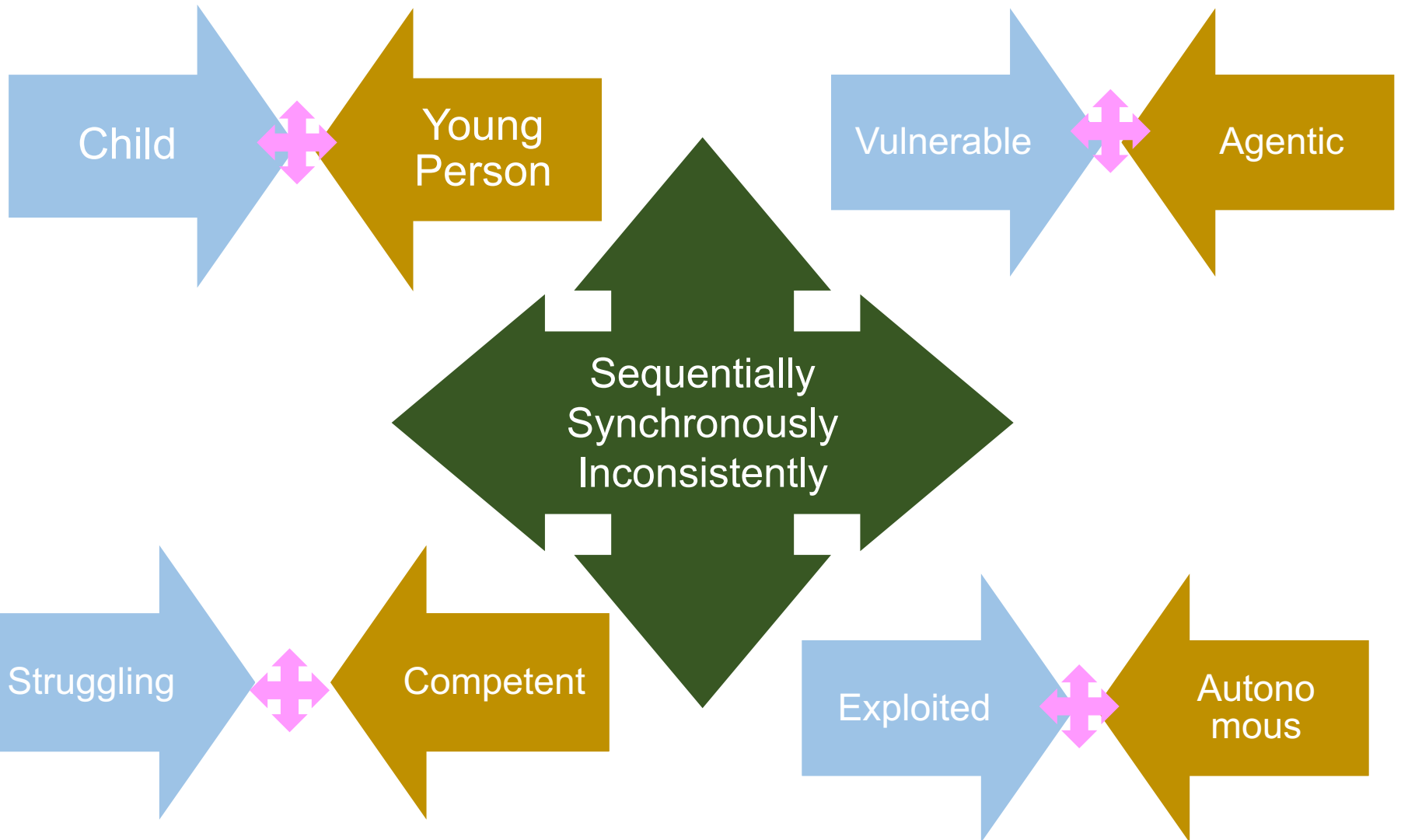
Sharing risk management with young people

- Doing with, rather than just doing for

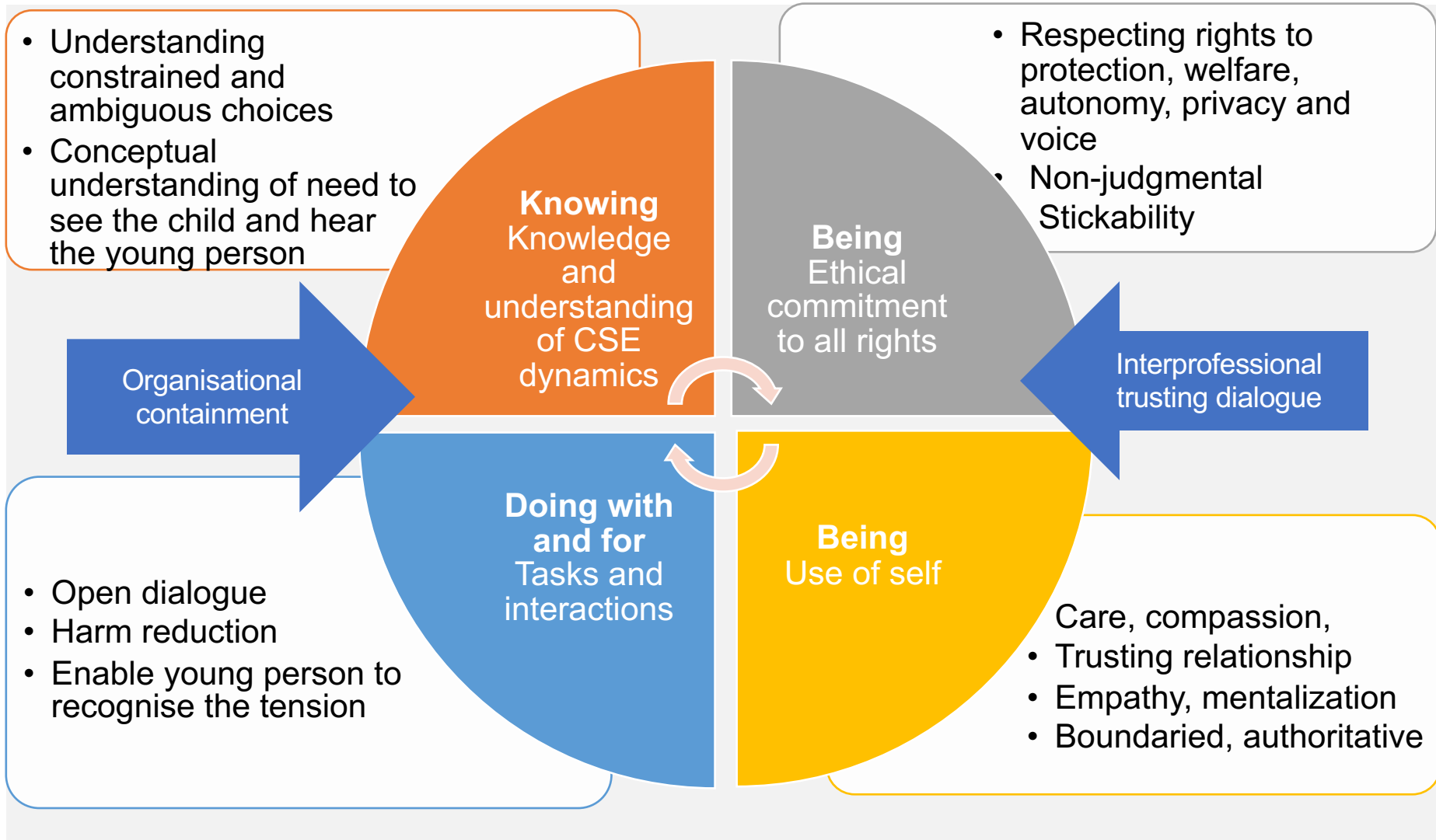
‘... keeping stuff on the table of ‘you don’t have to talk about it, it’s fine, but if you do want to talk about it we can do that whenever you want to’ [Social Worker]

‘... say to them ‘I know you don’t agree with this. I know you think this isn’t happening to you and I need you to trust me that little bit and we’ve worked together a long time... what I need you to do is to trust at this time is that you’re not making safe decisions’ [2nd survey]

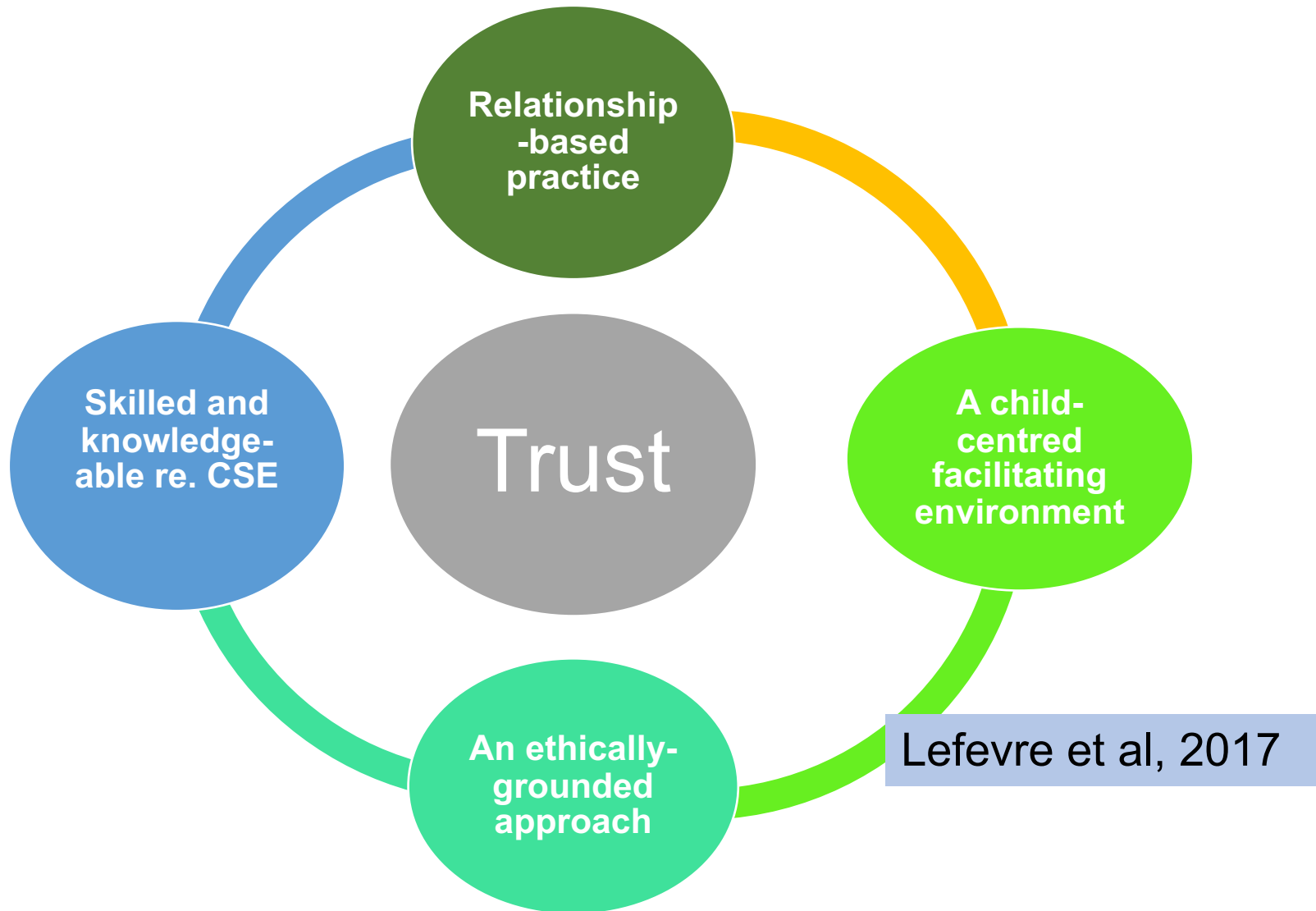
Ethical commitment to 'both/and' thinking: but how?



A relational integrated model of protection and participation



What builds trust?



Concluding thoughts

- Importance of involving YP as partners in their own protection
- The micro-encounter as a key space for change (Larkin, 2018).
- Relationship based practice, rooted in ethical, child-centred approaches, is essential to engaging young people's trust and co-operation.
- The organisation and system must provide the containment, (Ruch, 2012) to enable this:
 - Reflective supervision
 - Manageable workload
 - Emotional space and validation
 - A safe space for mutual learning and challenge – surface disagreement
- Both/and is a threshold concept for this field – requires safe challenge of self and others.

References

Berelowitz, S., Clifton, J., Firmin, C., Gulyurtlu, S. and Edwards, G. (2013) 'If Only Someone Had Listened': Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. Final Report, London, Office of the Children's Commissioner.

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